

Hi my name is _____ and this is the 8th principle minute. With the adoption of the 8th

Principle, our congregation committed to dismantle racism, beginning within our walls.

Last weekend we had our “Building a Culture of Inclusion” workshop, led by Paula Cole Jones. This enriching, day-long activity was the kick-off point for our efforts to dismantle institutional racism at First U. Certainly, we’ve been taking steps along that path for the past year, but this workshop provided us with a frame of reference and tools for the evaluation of what needs to be done.

We were presented with the concept of a congregation as a Community of Communities. This is an inclusive model in which each of the smaller communities is a fully engaged and entitled member of the larger community - the big tent we say we want to be. The Beloved Community that is our goal state is a community of communities that is living out the 8th Principle. Examples of some of our communities are the Women’s Alliance, the Worship Team, small group ministry, food pantry volunteers, children, our members with the longest history, the other groups with which we share our rented space, people living in Fanwood, etc. People can be members of multiple communities. Each of these communities has equal standing; none is inherently more powerful than another.

We at First U have always seen ourselves as a family, even when we were a much bigger congregation. We have viewed that as one of our main strengths, and indeed it is the source of many positive aspects of our work, including the long-standing efforts to address individual racism. Families, no matter how large, are, by their nature, exclusive structures. There is a clearly defined “in” and “out”. No matter how big we see the family, no matter how broad the definition of “in”, there is still an “out” and an intentional effort must be made to bring those on the outside in.

We now begin the work to transition to a community of communities. Starting with identifying what all of these communities are and engaging them in self-evaluation and goal setting.

Paula Cole Jones has asked to remain engaged with us and will return later in the year to speak with us about our progress.

Together we will continue this journey toward spiritual wholeness, build a beloved community, educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist. We will continue to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions.